

MSP SUCCESS

MAGAZINE

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Special Edition: Summer 2021

MSPSuccessMagazine.com

Greg Brainerd, CEO Braintek

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Greg Brainerd



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How Getting Fired Made Greg Brainerd A \$2 Million MSP

One afternoon in 2002, Greg Brainerd headed toward his boss's office at Pennzoil after he was called in. Am I going to get laid off? Greg secretly hoped. It wasn't a far-fetched notion. Shell Corporation had recently bought Pennzoil, and rumblings of rightsizing were in the air. He had worked for the oil and gas giant for three years as a network engineer on the graveyard shift. The job was challenging when issues occurred but not a lot happened during the night shifts.

Getting let go, Greg knew, was exactly the opportunity he needed to take control of his own future. Having already lived through a previous layoff during the dot-com crash in 2000, he didn't want to face that uncertainty in his career again.

Before today, Greg and his wife, Tracy, were already moonlighting – or daylighting in his case – working with small businesses handling system repairs, installations, software and hardware upgrades and networking – to the point that they were able to cover their base living expenses. He came home from his evening shift every morning, got a couple of hours of sleep and supported his own clients from 10:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. before his evening shift started, while Tracy attended chamber events in search of clients. They waited for the right time to take their business to the next level. Was this it?

Now, just a few minutes after walking through the door of his boss's office, staring fate head-on, to Greg's relief, he got his walking papers!

Unlike most people in that position, Greg reacted jubilantly, thanking his much-confused boss for the good news. "I was so excited they were firing me," Greg says. "I know they were relieved, and not quite expecting my reaction. It was probably the better of the firings they had to do!"

That was the push Greg and Tracy needed. They officially launched Braintek full-time in 2002, offering break-fix IT and managed services in Houston. It was an incredible journey, helping to make some of the area's small and medium-sized businesses operate more efficiently and productively. Tracy

spent her time running the office and handling bookkeeping, marketing and some schedule work while Greg took on most of the tech work.

During that first year, Greg had to learn how to make the transition from employed to self-employed, essentially "building myself a job, but one without paid time off."

Greg also felt the pressure of adding sales and marketing responsibilities to increase revenue.

He knew he wanted to grow the business but wasn't quite sure "what that meant." He spent his free time that year absorbing information from different sources and reading books like *Rich Dad, Poor Dad* and *Guerilla Marketing*, teaching himself about marketing and sales strategies – an effort that paid off.

Greg was able to move from the self-employed stage to business owner. He had a healthy balance sheet and a list of loyal clients. "Now I was able to get paid on a regular basis, take vacation time if I wanted to and, even if I'm not here, I still get paid," he says.

Since then, Braintek has grown from a two-person company to become one of Houston's most successful IT support and managed IT services, with nearly 20 employees, a client roster in the hundreds and revenues over \$2 million a year.

Greg has numerous certifications, including MCSE+ internet, A+ and CCNA, to name just a few. Having moved on from its original break-fix service model, Braintek provides a complete suite of professional and fully comprehensive IT support services, including cyber security, network support, help desk, cloud backups and server optimization to the construction and manufacturing industries.

Helping Move The Construction Industry From A Paper To A Digital World

For almost every major industry, technology has been a driving force behind their successes over the last decade. But the construction industry was a relatively slow adopter until just a

handful of years ago, relying on stacks of spreadsheets, diagrams, architectural drawings and blueprints to operate in and out of the field. Now it's not only catching up, it's innovating with tools like AutoCAD and building information modeling, or BIM.

Houston is enjoying a construction boom – currently leading the US in new home construction – providing a niche market for Braintek.

From inception, Braintek made its name supporting the oil and gas industries. But the highs-and-lows nature of the business spurred Greg to specialize in other sectors to help "round us out."

As the construction and manufacturing industries continued to invest in digital tools, Greg saw it as an obvious market and an opportunity to help local construction companies increase their efficiencies and remain competitive. Braintek's expertise as a business IT department, help desk and technology advisor has made the company a sought-after partner in Houston's built world.

"The industries require expensive machines like CNCs and plotters, and some really cool tech for us to play with like AutoCAD," Greg says. "It's just great to be part of that process and step into another world we weren't used to."

Lifelong Learning Is Key To The Success Of Braintek

Ask Greg to explain how he and the rest of his Braintek team successfully grow their service portfolio across multiple industries, and he sums up the answer in one word: learning.

Ever since he first sat down to troubleshoot computer problems, by "going out there and trying stuff until it worked," constantly learning and staying ahead of technology has been a personal goal as well as a part of the Braintek culture.

"On-the-job training, boot camps, certifications in software, Internet, networks – it's what allows us to adapt and move to the next stage," Greg says.

While they are experts at many things IT, there is some specialized industry technology knowledge they acquire along the way. "When we aren't as familiar with a certain device, we work as a liaison between our client and the manufacturer of the device to get the problem solved," Greg says.



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Why You Want An IT Company That Doesn't Have Time For Small Talk

Greg says a key early goal at Braintek was to not just solve problems but solve them quickly – and do it consistently. He is admittedly a direct and to-the-point kind of person, an approach he adopted when the bulk of his work was service, and he was charging by the hour.

"Back when I was still doing support, my clients liked the fact that I didn't waste time. I'd come out to the site, have them show me what the problem was, move them out of the way, work on it, then have them come back and check it out. I valued their time and appreciated their budget. I didn't hang around for mindless chitchat, then bill them for that extra time," says Greg.

Braintek stands out by responding to a client's issue within minutes. In fact, it's their competitive advantage. When onboarding a new client, one of the first questions Braintek gets asked is: How long does it take for you to respond? The answer is literally five minutes or less. The #1 reason new clients come to Braintek is because they "can't get a hold of their IT guy."

Though Greg no longer handles the support level – he focuses his efforts on sales, marketing and running the business – his entire organization continues to operate with the fastest response time in their market.

Giving Clients The Support To Grow

All of Braintek's clients have come to count on technology as a crucial part of their business's viability – even though they find it frustrating at times. But getting them to embrace technology doesn't always happen immediately. Sometimes it takes a push and some encouragement for customers to see what having a solid IT strategy will mean for their future success.

"Everybody has a comfort zone, and we're all happy staying inside of it. Until we're not," says Greg. "Getting laid off all those years ago taught me that. It was the push I needed to move forward and grow my own business. That's what I want to do for my clients."

To learn more about Braintek visit www.Braintek.com

